

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A buffer unit fragments variable-length packets into fixed-length packets for processing in units of fixed-length packets. The buffer unit includes a fixed-length packet storing section for storing the fixed-length packets for each of output paths, a multicasting processor for storing multicasting packets having a plurality of destinations and transferring the multicasting packets to the fixed-length packet storing section depending on the plurality of destinations, and a controller for monitoring a storage state of the fixed-length packet storing section and carrying out a control so that the multicasting packets are transferred within a variable-length packet formed by a plurality of fixed-length packets.

20

25

30

35